



POURDAVOUD CENTER LECTURE SERIES



THE LORDS OF CANALS

RE-EXAMINING THE SASANIAN HYDRAULIC LANDSCAPES  
AND THEIR HERITAGE IN THE ISLAMIC PERIOD

APRIL 3, 2019 | 4:00 P.M. | 306 ROYCE HALL

MEHRNOUSH SOROUSH (HARVARD UNIVERSITY)

**Sasanian kings are known as builders** of impressive hydraulic projects such as the monumental canal of Nahrawan (in southern Iraq), and the Shadorwan bridge of Shushtar (in southwestern Iran). Sasanian hydraulic landscapes have had a profound impact on anthropological discourse of empires and water management, as they linked large and complex water infrastructures to a highly centralized state system. The evidence for state engineering is found in the linearity of Sasanian canals and the monumentality of their bridges and weirs. It is commonly believed that the monumental Sasanian waterworks fell into decline in the sixth and seventh centuries because of the decline of the state power and its eventual demise in the wake of the Islamic conquest. This recent multidisciplinary study of the hydraulic infrastructures of Sasanian cities highlights the *longue durée* of Sasanian water management in southwestern Iran and stresses both the connection of Sasanian waterworks to prior investments and the evidence for continuous investment in Sasanian hydraulic landscapes in the Islamic period.

SPEAKER



**Mehnoush Soroush** is an archaeologist and historian of ancient water infrastructures. She holds a Ph.D. from the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World

(ISAW) at New York University, and is currently a Visiting Fellow in the Center for Geographic Analysis at Harvard University. Her research integrates digital technologies, fieldwork, and textual sources in order to investigate the history and intersection of water management and urbanism in the Iranian World. She is primarily interested in examining how water technologies enabled the formation and maintenance of a burgeoning network of Iranian cities in arid and semi-arid regions that relied on market-oriented irrigation agriculture and water intensive industries.

**The mission of the Pourdavoud Center for the Study of the Iranian World** is to engage in transformative research on all aspects of Iranian antiquity, including its reception in the medieval and modern periods, by expanding on the traditional domains of Old Iranian studies and promoting cross-cultural and inter-disciplinary scholarship.

**Advanced registration is requested. For more information and to RSVP, please click [here](#).**

Self-pay parking in Structure 4 is recommended.  
Light refreshments will be served.